



Hometown Hockey article – (By Marshall Starkman with Roger Neilson)

Positioning the Key to Great Goaltending

It takes many skills to be a great goalie but there are none more important than good positioning and skating. Goalies who are in the right place at the right time improve their chances of stopping pucks, and make their jobs easier as a result.

Some of the best positional goaltenders in the game are Patrick Roy, Martin Brodeur and Ed Belfour. These goalies are so disciplined that they often make saves look easy. The truth is, getting into good position is hard work and requires a lot of practice. Here are a few points to remember that will help you get to where you want to be when making saves:

1. Stay low in your stance. Bending your knees and getting your rear-end down will give you the power you need to explode in and around the crease.
2. Dig your toes in hard and use full leg-extension when pushing to an angle. The more powerful your stride, the less time it will take to get into position.
3. Be aggressive when cutting down angles. Try to position yourself outside of the blue paint of the crease to make your saves. Challenging the shooters gives them less net to shoot at.
4. Imagine a line from the middle of your chest to the middle of the puck. When you get to where you want to go, dig in, stop and set for the shot. You want complete control of your body when stopping the puck.

Getting to the right position in time is half the battle a goaltender faces. Ron Tugnutt of the Dallas Stars always tells the young goalies at our hockey school that goaltending is about 'starts & stops' – starting by pushing hard to cut down the angle and getting into position, stopping when you get there and setting for the shot. You often have to 'start & stop' several times before the shot is taken.

Olaf Kolzig of the Washington Capitals has often said that he is at his best when he looks like a 'boring' goaltender. If people notice that he is making incredible saves, chances are he is not in position and is forced to make them look difficult. Rather, when the saves he makes look simple, he knows that he is at the top of his game. By being in good position, he is able to make them look easy.

This is how you should aspire to play. There may be less glory in making saves look easy, but you will be rewarded with a higher save percentage and likely a lower goals against average as well.